

PENNSYLVANIA LESBIAN/GAY SUPPORT NETWORK

NEWSLETTER
Vol. IV
No. 4

May 1981

NEXT MEETING: Saturday May 9th, 1PM
FREINDS MEETINGHOUSE, 6th & HERRS STS., HARRISBURG

MAY MEETING OF THE NETWORK

The next meeting of the Network will be Saturday 9 May. We will finalize further legislative action on pending State Bills and continue with current worksessions and establish new ones.

WORKSESSIONS

Wondering how Network ideas get translated into action? Learn one way by choosing and being a part of three worksessions at the May meeting. One and half hours in the afternoon will be allotted to structured small groups to work on our comprehensive lobbying book, Pride '82, and an Awareness Campaign to communicate with other organizations and the media. So far the worksessions have been a great success. It's your chance to help move the Network forward.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

The Network will focus on State legislation; however we still feel it very important to keep you posted on impacting Federal Legislation. A Gay Civil Rights Act has been introduced into the 97th Congress. HR 1454: The Civil Rights Ammendmants Act of 1981 has been introduced into the House of Rep. by Ted Weiss (D-NY) and Henry Waxman (D-CA). This Act is the reintroduction of HR 2074 into the 97th Congress. At the close of the 96th Congress the Bill had 55 co-sponsors. HR 1454 will amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. It currently has 44 co-sponsors. Immediately following this introduction, Rep. McDonald (R-Georgia) introduced a House concurrent Resolution 29 expressing the sense of the Congress that homosexual acts and the class of individuals who advocate such conduct shall never receive special consideration or a protected status under law. We would strongly request that you write your congressmen asking

for their support of HR 1454 and condemn Resolution 29.

The Select Committee on Immigration and Refugee Policy has recommended that the exclusion provisions of the Immigration and Naturalization Act be modernized. Legislation to remove the exclusionary provision applied against homosexuals was introduced in the 96th Congress. We would urge you to write your congressperson and urge them to re-introduce legislation.

A related story is that on Monday 27 April a Federal Appeals Court reversed an Alexandria, Virginia Judge decision that an admitted homosexual cannot be denied citizenship because of his sexual preference. Lawyers familiar with gay rights hailed the decision as a major victory for homosexuals because it prevents the federal government from using state laws to determine what constitutes good moral character.

H.B. 500

On February 10, a "public sex" bill was introduced in the state House of Representatives and sent to the Judiciary Committee. It was introduced by John Alden (R-Del.), who has been a representative for just two years. Many of the Co-sponsors have never signed on any anti-gay legislation before.

The Bill basically reads:

Public Sex Acts.

(a) Offense defined--A person who engages in a public display of sexual intercourse or deviate sexual intercourse is guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree.

(b) Definition--As used in this section, the term "deviate sexual intercourse" means sexual intercourse per os or per anus between human beings and any form of sexual intercourse with an animal.

Section 2 This act shall take effect in 60 days.

(clip and mail to: PL/GSN PO Box 822, Federal Square Station, Harrisburg, Pa. 17108)

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The Judiciary Committee, where the Bill has been referred, is chaired by Warren Spencer (R Tioga). Several co-sponsors of the Bill sit on the Committee.

HB 500 is more fallout from last year's controversial Allegheny Court case. The defendants were arrested for engaging in heterosexual "sodomy" on stage. They were acquitted on privacy and other arguments. The State Supreme Court concurred and held that the Pennsylvania "sodomy" law was unconstitutional. The ruling effectively eliminated criminal penalties for consensual oral and anal sex.

After the ruling, four bills were introduced in the General Assembly dealing with sex in public places and/or reinstituting sodomy as a crime. All four died at the end of the last legislative session.

Our objections to the Bill center on the following points:

1) "Public" is not defined. Does it mean anywhere but a residence, as interpreted in Montreal? What about motels, vehicles, rest rooms, baths? Or does it mean downtown streets?

2) "Display" is not defined. Does it mean visible? If so, to whom? Are spectators required?

3) The bill re-establishes oral and anal sex as a "deviant," a concept that gay rights advocates have been striving to put to rest. The Bill does not penalize "private" sex between consenting adults.

4) It is unnecessary, since the offenses are presumably covered under existing "lewd" laws.

The Bill would have an impact on both gay and heterosexual people. Of course it is expected to be selectively enforced. The chances of passage are good, if the bill reaches the floor.

A MORE DANGEROUS BILL: H.B. 1036

A second "public sex" bill was introduced into the Pennsylvania House of Representatives on March 25. H.B. 1036 has 7 co-sponsors, including Reps. Dietz, Vroon, and Cunningham, who have sponsored anti-gay legislation in the past. Like H.B. 500, it has been referred to the Judiciary Committee.

H.B. 1036 is a much more confusing and dangerous bill, however. Not only does it penalize "public displays" of so-called deviate sexual intercourse and other sexual intercourse without defining "public," it also re-establishes all (including private) "voluntary deviate sexual intercourse" as a punishable offense. In doing so, the only concession to the Allegheny County Court case is that the marital relationship of the partners is completely disregarded.

The bill also introduces the concept of "indecent contact" ("any touching of the sexual

or other intimate parts (?) of the person for the purpose of arousing or gratifying sexual desire in either person" -- apparently public or not) and prohibits it.

Not only is the bill's language a nightmarish labyrinth, but the bill itself, if passed, will be very harmful to people of all sexual orientations. The penalty for all "voluntary deviate sexual intercourse," public displays of intercourse, and "indecent contact" is a maximum of 2 years in jail.

The co-chairs of the Network have scheduled meetings with friendly and influential members of the House to discuss the prospects of these bills and possible action by the Network that may help in killing them. In the meantime, write to your representative.

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS RESOLUTION PASSED

At the April meeting, the Network passed the following resolution unanimously:

The Pennsylvania Lesbian/Gay Support Network stands opposed to Human Life Amendments and any other state or federal legislation which would restrict or take away any woman's right to choose an abortion or birth control method. This is in keeping with the Network's policy stressing non-interference of government in the private and personal lives of its citizens.

Members are urged to participate in local and state actions coordinated by NOW, NARAL, and various coalitions and religious groups that fight these proliferating constitutional amendments and bills.

REQUEST TO CO-HOST PRIDE '82

Recently the Pride '82 worksession sent letters to many gay and lesbian organizations in the state announcing plans for the next statewide conference. If we missed you somehow and your group is interested in co-hosting Pride '82 with the Network, please call Rodger Beatty at (717) 657-1812 or Mary Nancarrow at (717) 766-5486 for more information.

HAPPENINGS

A free concert by Woody Simmons, West Coast feminist musician, songwriter, and singer will be presented by Homophiles of Penn State (HOPS) at State College on Friday, May 15, at 8:00pm. For free tickets and more info, call the Gayline, (814) 863-0588.

Metropolitan Community Church of Harrisburg will hold Sunday services starting May 31. Call Gary Norton at (717) 238-3746 for the rundown on all MCC activities.

Gay Pride Day is coming on June 28 in New York City.

PENNSYLVANIA PRIMARIES WILL BE TUESDAY, MAY 19.